

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

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HABS No. IL-1187-A

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
924 South Homan Avenue
(Homan Avenue at Arthington Street)
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

Documentation: 33 exterior photographs (1994)
44 interior photographs (1994)
13 photographic copies of photographs
37 photograph of original construction drawings

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer March, 1994

IL-1187-A-1	EAST FRONT AND NORTHEAST CORNER
IL-1187-A-2	NORTHEAST CORNER
IL-1187-A-3	EAST FRONT, SOUTH END AND TOWER
IL-1187-A-4	TOWER, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
IL-1187-A-5	DETAIL, UPPER FLOORS AT EAST FRONT, NORTH OF TOWER
IL-1187-A-6	EAST FRONT, MAIN ENTRANCE AT BASE OF TOWER
IL-1187-A-7	NORTHEAST CORNER, CORNERSTONE
IL-1187-A-8	OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
IL-1187-A-9	NORTH SIDE, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
IL-1187-A-10	NORTH SIDE, EAST END INCLUDING TOWER
IL-1187-A-11	NORTH SIDE (EXCLUDING GROCERY BUILDING)
IL-1187-A-12	GROCERY BUILDING, (BAYS 11 AND 12), VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
IL-1187-A-13	NORTH SIDE, VIEW OF TYPICAL 1905 BAY
IL-1187-A-14	NORTH SIDE, ANNEX B, VIEW OF TYPICAL BAY
IL-1187-A-15	NORTH SIDE, VIEW OF TRUCK DOCKS
IL-1187-A-16	NORTH SIDE, DETAIL OF TRUCK DOCKS

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 2)

IL-1187-A-17	NORTH SIDE, ENTRANCE TO RETAIL STORE
IL-1187-A-18	NORTH SIDE, ENTRANCE TO GROCERY BUILDING (BAYS 11 AND 12)
IL-1187-A-19	WEST SIDE OF GROCERY BUILDING, BRIDGE TO CATALOGUE OPERATIONS BUILDING, AND ANNEX A, WITH MERCHANDISE BUILDING TOWER IN BACKGROUND
IL-1187-A-20	OVERALL VIEW OF SOUTH SIDE
IL-1187-A-21	SOUTHEAST CORNER
IL-1187-A-22	SOUTH SIDE, VIEW OF TYPICAL 1905 BAY
IL-1187-A-23	SOUTH SIDE, ANNEX A, VIEW OF TYPICAL BAY
IL-1187-A-24	SOUTH SIDE, VIEW TO NORTHEAST
IL-1187-A-25	SOUTH SIDE, ANNEX A, RAILROAD TRESTLE, INCLUDING RAILROAD TRACK SPUR
IL-1187-A-26	SOUTH SIDE, ANNEX A, SECOND THROUGH FOURTH FLOORS
IL-1187-A-27	ROOF OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING AND INTERIOR WALLS OF COURT, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
IL-1187-A-28	SHIPPING COURT ROOF AND COURTYARD WALLS, VIEW TO WEST
IL-1187-A-29	NORTH SIDE, ANNEX A, AND ROOF OF TRAIN SHED
IL-1187-A-30	VIEW OF TRUCK RAMP, INCLUDING SOUTH SIDE OF BOX FACTORY, GROCERY BUILDING, AND ANNEX B, AND NORTH SIDE OF ANNEX A, VIEW TO EAST
IL-1187-A-31	SOUTH SIDE OF TRUCK COURT, BOX FACTORY, AND GROCERY BUILDING, VIEW TO NORTHWEST
IL-1187-A-32	TRUCK COURT AND CURVED NORTH WALL OF ANNEX A, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
IL-1187-A-33	NORTH SIDE, ANNEX A, SECOND THROUGH SEVENTH FLOORS INCLUDING TRUCK SHIPPING DOCKS
IL-1187-A-34	TOWER, FIRST FLOOR, ENTRANCE LOBBY
IL-1187-A-35	TOWER, SECOND FLOOR, GENERAL VIEW OF STAIR WITH ORNAMENTAL NEWEL POST

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 3)

IL-1187-A-36	BASEMENT, SECTION F, SAFE FOR BANK
IL-1187-A-37	BASEMENT, SECTION F, SAFE FOR BANK
IL-1187-A-38	BASEMENT, SECTION F, 1880S SAFE
IL-1187-A-39	BASEMENT, SECTION H, NORTH PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION
IL-1187-A-40	BASEMENT, SECTION C, SOUTH PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION
IL-1187-A-41	SEVENTH FLOOR, SECTION D, PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION
IL-1187-A-42	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION P, GENERAL VIEW OF WAREHOUSE AT SECOND FLOOR INCLUDING CARTS
IL-1187-A-43	SEVENTH FLOOR, SECTION D, OPEN FLOOR WITHOUT SHELVES
IL-1187-A-44	THIRD FLOOR, GROCERY BUILDING (SECTION 11), GENERAL VIEW OF ROOM
IL-1187-A-45	THIRD FLOOR, SECTION C, SHELVING, CONVEYORS, AND INTERIOR COURTYARD WALL
IL-1187-A-46	NINTH FLOOR, ANNEX A, CORRIDOR
IL-1187-A-47	NINTH FLOOR, SECTION D, GENERAL VIEW OF ROOM SHOWING SKYLIGHT WELLS
IL-1187-A-48	NINTH FLOOR, SECTION P, GENERAL VIEW OF ROOM SHOWING SKYLIGHT WELLS
IL-1187-A-49	SEVENTH FLOOR, SECTION D, EMPLOYEE BREAK ROOM
IL-1187-A-50	SEVENTH FLOOR, BETWEEN SECTIONS D AND I, PASSENGER ELEVATOR GRILL
IL-1187-A-51	BASEMENT, BETWEEN SECTIONS D AND I, DETAIL OF PASSENGER ELEVATOR GRILL
IL-1187-A-52	SECOND FLOOR, BETWEEN SECTIONS J AND K, GENERAL VIEW OF STAIR
IL-1187-A-53	SECOND FLOOR, BETWEEN SECTIONS K AND L, GENERAL VIEW OF STAIR
IL-1187-A-54	SIXTH FLOOR, SECTION H, CONVEYORS AND MERCHANDISE STORAGE SHELVES
IL-1187-A-55	THIRD FLOOR, SECTION G, SPIRAL CHUTE AND CONVEYOR

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 4)

IL-1187-A-56	SIXTH FLOOR, SECTION H, SPIRAL CHUTE AND CONVEYOR
IL-1187-A-57	NINTH FLOOR, SECTION C, TOP OF SPIRAL CHUTE
IL-1187-A-58	SIXTH FLOOR, SECTION H, SPIRAL CHUTE DOOR
IL-1187-A-59	SIXTH FLOOR, SECTION H, DETAIL OF PLAQUE ON SPIRAL CHUTE DOOR
IL-1187-A-60	SIXTH FLOOR, SECTION H, SPIRAL CHUTE INTERIOR
IL-1187-A-61	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION C, BOTTOM OF SPIRAL CHUTE WITH CONVEYORS
IL-1187-A-62	THIRD FLOOR, SECTION E, VIEW OF CONVEYORS
IL-1187-A-63	THIRD FLOOR, SHIPPING COURT, CONVEYORS FROM SORTING AREA TO PACKAGE HANDLING AND WRAPPING.
IL-1187-A-64	THIRD FLOOR, SHIPPING COURT, VIEW OF PRESORT ROOM
IL-1187-A-65	THIRD FLOOR, SHIPPING COURT, VIEW OF CONVEYORS FROM SUPERVISOR'S PLATFORM
IL-1187-A-66	SECOND FLOOR, SHIPPING COURT, CONVEYORS AND SPIRAL SLIDES, VIEW FROM SECOND TO THIRD FLOOR
IL-1187-A-67	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION A, MEZZANINE, CROW'S NEST STATION
IL-1187-A-68	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION A, PACKER'S STATION
IL-1187-A-69	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION B, LARGE PACKAGE HANDLING STATION
IL-1187-A-70	SECOND FLOOR, SECTION B, DETAIL OF LARGE PACKAGE HANDLING STATION
IL-1187-A-71	CONTROL DELIVERY SERVICE (CDS) ORDER BINS
IL-1187-A-72	SECOND FLOOR, TRAIN SHED BETWEEN ANNEX A AND ANNEX B, GENERAL VIEW
IL-1187-A-73	SECOND FLOOR, TRAIN SHED BETWEEN ANNEX A AND ANNEX B, DETAIL OF CONVEYORS AT EAST END
IL-1187-A-74	TENTH FLOOR, TYPICAL OFFICE AREA

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 5)

- IL-1187-A-75 TOWER, TWELFTH FLOOR, WATER STORAGE TANKS FOR SPRINKLER SYSTEM
- IL-1187-A-76 FOURTEENTH FLOOR, GENERAL VIEW OF OBSERVATION LEVEL, VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
- IL-1187-A-77 FOURTEENTH FLOOR, GENERAL VIEW OF OBSERVATION LEVEL, VIEW TO NORTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-78 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST DURING CONSTRUCTION
- IL-1187-A-79 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO NORTHEAST DURING CONSTRUCTION
- IL-1187-A-80 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
MERCHANDISE BUILDING, NORTHEAST CORNER
- IL-1187-A-81 Photographic copy of photograph (August, 1911, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
PANORAMIC VIEW OF NORTH SIDE OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING WITH ATHLETIC FIELD IN FOREGROUND
- IL-1187-A-82 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1917, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
VIEW OF TRAIN SPUR AND ENTRANCE TO TRAIN SHED AT WEST SIDE OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-83 Photographic copy of photograph (1964, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
AERIAL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-84 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, TRAIN SHED, VIEW TO EAST

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 6)

- IL-1187-A-85 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, NORTH PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION, SECTION H, BASEMENT, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-86 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, TYPICAL MERCHANDISE DEPARTMENT
- IL-1187-A-87 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, LABELING PORTION OF SHIPPING DEPARTMENT
- IL-1187-A-88 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, SHIPPING COURT, SECOND FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-89 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1920, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, PACKAGING DEPARTMENT SECOND FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-90 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1920s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, SHIPPING COURT, THIRD FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-91 Photographic copy of drawing (16 February 1905, reproduction of original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/16 inch to one foot.
Plan dimensions are given on this floor plan of the first four bays of warehouse west of Homan Avenue. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 7)

- IL-1187-A-92 Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, reproduction of original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Floor plans of the levels of the Tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
TOWER FLOOR PLANS
- IL-1187-A-93 Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Partial elevation drawing of the first four bays west of Homan Avenue. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
NORTH ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-94 Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Partial elevation drawing of the first four bays west of Homan Avenue.
SOUTH ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-95 Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Main elevation along Homan Avenue, including the tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
EAST ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-96 Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Elevation of the west face showing the original 1905 construction, where Annex A and B were built to a height of three floors.
WEST ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-97 Photographic copy of drawing (14 February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/16 inch to one foot.
Section drawings through the first four warehouse bays west of Homan Avenue.
TRANSVERSE AND LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 8)

- IL-1187-A-98 Photographic copy of drawing (15 March 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted.
Detail sheet includes elevation details at the top of the tower.
TOWER PLANS AND DETAILS
- IL-1187-A-99 Photographic copy of drawing (15 March 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows, E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers). 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted.
Detail sheet includes wall section at the top of the tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
TOWER PLANS AND DETAILS
- IL-1187-A-100 Photographic copy of drawing (February, 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot. Large scale details for the north elevation. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.
DETAIL ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS
- IL-1187-A-101 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
First floor plan for the portions of Annex A and Annex B built in 1905 (three floors only) along with the nine floors along Homan Avenue.
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-102 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Section through train shed, including the elevation of the curved wall of the end bay. Opposite hand section provided in field record.
NORTH ELEVATION - ANNEX A
- IL-1187-A-103 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
South elevation adjacent to the railroad tracks; only the first three floors were built at that time.
SOUTH ELEVATION - ANNEX A

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 9)

- IL-1187-A-104 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
North elevation along Arthington Street (then Harvard Street); only the first three floors were built at that time.
NORTH ELEVATION - ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-105 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Shows elevation of the train shed, the curved facade of Annex A, and Annex B before the Grocery Building was constructed.
WEST ELEVATION - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-106 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Section through annexes and train shed, with elevation of nine story portion of warehouse.
TRANSVERSE SECTION - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-107 Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot.
Large scale drawings of elevation details.
DETAIL ELEVATIONS - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-108 Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Floor plan for the first addition to Annex A. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN (ANNEX A, BAYS J AND K, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-109 Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Floor plan for the first addition to Annex B. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN (ANNEX B, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 10)

- IL-1187-A-110 Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Drawings for the first addition to Annex B. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.
SOUTH ELEVATION (ANNEX B, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-111 Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Drawings for the first addition to Annex A. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set in Sears drawing archive.
WEST ELEVATION AND TRANSVERSE SECTION (ANNEX A, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-112 Photographic copy of drawing (1912, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). George C. Nimmons. 1/8 inch to one foot.
This floor plan is the only original drawing for bays 11 and 12 (Grocery Building), constructed at the corner of Arthington (then called Harvard Street) and Central Park Avenue. The building was constructed in 1912 and designed by the firm of George C. Nimmons. This structure is of reinforced concrete construction.
GROCERY BUILDING, BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
- IL-1187-A-113 Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Elevation along the train shed. Second addition to Annex A.
NORTH ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-114 Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Elevation adjacent to the railroad tracks. Second addition to Annex A.

SOUTH ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 11)

- IL-1187-A-115 Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot. Shows the curved end bay of the warehouse. Second addition to Annex A.
WEST ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-116 Photographic copy of drawing (25 June 1917, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 131. 1/64 inch to one foot.
Schematic plan of the Merchandise Building, describing the type of construction of the different portions of the building and shows the layout of the railroad tracks around the building. At the date of this drawing the building had all of the major additions complete (to Annex A, Annex B, and the Box Factory).
SCHEMATIC FLOOR PLAN
- IL-1187-A-117 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Larsen-Wulff Architects. 1/16 inch to one foot.
Drawing of the entire floor plan from Homan Avenue to Central Park Avenue, probably traced in the 1970s or early 1980s.
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - EAST HALF
- IL-1187-A-118 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Larsen-Wulff Architects. 1/16 inch to one foot.
Drawing of the entire floor plan from Homan Avenue to Central Park Avenue, probably traced in the 1970s or early 1980s.
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - WEST HALF
- IL-1187-A-119 Photographic copy of drawing (26 April 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/4 inch to one foot.
Section drawing with the relationship of the spiral chutes in bays B and G to the shipping area.
SECTION THROUGH MERCHANDISE BUILDING LOOKING EAST
SHOWING SYSTEM OF CONVEYORS IN SHIPPING DEPARTMENT

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 12)

- IL-1187-A-120 Photographic copy of drawing (revised 10 May 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/16 inch to one foot. Partial (third?) Floor plan around the shipping area court, showing the arrangement of the conveyors. (Drawing title is not legible.)
CONVEYORS - MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-121 Photographic copy of drawing (13 May 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch to one foot.
Plan and section drawings for the installation of spiral chutes, includes structural framing details.
DETAILS OF SPIRAL CONVEYORS IN MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-122 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably before 1913, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Martin C. Schwab. 1/8 inch to one foot.
Partial second/third floor plan with the conveyor arrangement in the shipping room with a conveyor extension to the Post Office.
ARRANGEMENT OF SHIPPING ROOM BELT CONVEYORS IN MERCHANDISE BUILDING FOR SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.
- IL-1187-A-123 Photographic copy of drawing (6 October 1916, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 213 (engineer unknown). 1/16 inch to one foot.
Partial fourth/fifth floor plan and schematic building section showing the relationship of the gravity conveyors in the warehouse space to the spiral chutes.
GENERAL LAYOUT OF ALL MDSE DEPT. CONVEYORS
- IL-1187-A-124 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet.
Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 1 - BASEMENT)

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 13)

- IL-1187-A-125 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 2 - BASEMENT)
- IL-1187-A-126 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 16 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 3 - BASEMENT)
- IL-1187-A-127 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 9 - FOURTH FLOOR)
- IL-1187-A-128 Photographic copy of drawing (revised 2 November 1927, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Engineer unknown. 3/16 inch to one foot.
Partial second floor plan of the shipping area showing modifications. rearrangement of receiving racks, conveyors, etc.
- IL-1187-A-129 Photographic copy of drawing (24 June 1963, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Swain and Meyers, Inc. 1/4 inch to one foot.
Partial floor plan illustrating the layout of the large package handling area. Tables and equipment not present at the time of the survey are shown.
SECOND FLOOR, SECTION B

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building
Index to Photographs
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 14)

- IL-1187-A-130 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Engineer unknown. Full size.
Pneumatic tube cartridges used at the time of the Plant closing.
4" PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM - 11" LEATHER CARRIER
- IL-1187-A-131 Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Engineer unknown. Full size.
Pneumatic tube cartridges used at the time of the Plant closing.
4" PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM - 11" LEATHER CARRIER